

Trade

Per

capita, our state is the most trade dependent state in the nation. Creating new markets for Washington's products and services generates jobs and economic growth. However, the dumping of underpriced, subsidized imports has cost jobs in our district and across our nation. I am committed to expanding trade, but in a manner which prevents illegal dumping, supports Southwest Washington jobs and businesses, and stimulates economic growth in the Pacific Northwest and throughout the United States.

I believe the Congress

has a constitutional right and responsibility to have a strong voice in trade agreements. We must analyze all proposed trade agreements and judge them based on their ability to generate jobs in our region. I also believe trade must be fair. Allowing countries to violate international labor standards and exploit the environment provides an unfair competitive advantage to our trading partners. American workers cannot compete against foreign workers who lack the right to organize, demand fair wages, and work in safe conditions. We must insist on strong, enforceable labor and environmental standards in trade negotiations. This is both a moral obligation and an economic necessity for American workers to successfully compete in the global economy.

Based on these principles, I have voted in favor of some trade accords that I believed were in our best regional and national interest, but I have opposed legislation when I thought it would harm our economy or undermined the constitutional role of Congress. This principled, reasoned approach will continue to guide my decisions on future trade agreements that come before the Congress.

Preventing the loss of Manufacturing Jobs

Rep. Baird is deeply concerned by the loss of American manufacturing jobs and thinks the Congress and President should review all U.S. trade agreements to ensure that our trading partners comply with those agreements. To that end, Congressman Baird believes our government must:

- Review China's World Trade Organization (WTO) accession agreement, to ensure full compliance by our trading partners.
- Press our Asian trading partners to stop manipulating their currencies to gain trade advantages.

- Support tax advantages for U.S. manufacturers that produce goods domestically and repeal tax breaks that encourage U.S. companies to incorporate overseas.
- Refuse to sign future trade agreements that lack the International Labor Organization core labor standards and stringent environmental protections.
- Ensure foreign governments do not violate trade obligations by unfairly subsidizing their exports to the U.S.
- Strengthen technical education for our students in vocational schools and community colleges and provide training for workers who have been displaced by foreign trade.

Fast-Track

Since the 1970s, Congress has intermittently provided the president with the authority to negotiate trade agreements in an expedited fashion. This authority is known as fast-track, or trade promotion authority. Congressman Baird believes fast-track is acceptable only under strict conditions. Specifically, Congressman Baird believes trade agreements must require our trading partners to maintain basic labor standards. American companies that are required to uphold stringent labor standards cannot compete with foreign companies allowed to pay their workers a fraction of U.S. wages. Not requiring strong labor standards from our competitors puts our own citizens at risk of losing their jobs. Additionally, Congressman Baird believes environmental standards should be negotiated in trade bills, as American businesses must adhere to strict environmental standards. Finally, Congressman Baird believes the President should consult with Congress when negotiating trade agreements, as trade agreements are one of Congress' constitutional responsibilities.

In 2002, Congress reauthorized fast-track authority for President Bush by a single vote margin in the House of Representatives. Congressman Baird voted against the fast-track bill because it did not protect Congress' constitutional role and voice and because it failed to require that labor and environmental standards be considered in trade accords. As fast-track approaches expiration this year, Congressman Baird will continue to monitor negotiations regarding its renewal very closely in order to ensure that any proposal for renewal would allow Congress the appropriate level of involvement in reviewing trade agreements, and would provide sufficient protections for labor and environmental standards.

Trade Adjustment Assistance

While we must do everything we can to help maintain U.S. jobs at home, if jobs are lost as a result of trade we should help the workers and their families adjust and develop new skills. The Trade Adjustment

Assistance Program (TAA) is a federally funded program that provides aid to American workers who have lost their jobs or whose wages and work hours have decreased due to increased trade. Workers may qualify for job training, help with a job search, allowances for relocation, and income assistance. Congressman Baird has supported legislation to strengthen and enhance this program.

Buy America

Congressman Baird has fought to preserve the "Buy America" provision in our federal transportation laws. The Buy America law requires that federally-funded transportation projects use domestic iron and steel. The law was put into place to ensure that, when taxpayer money is spent on highway projects, these expenditures stimulate United States production and job creation.

Buy America is important because it helps working men and women in Southwest Washington and throughout the United States keep their jobs and earn decent, family wages. Buy America also strengthens our domestic steel industry, which is critical to our national security and necessary for our ability to rebuild after a devastating natural disaster or terrorist attack.

Congressman Baird has participated in hearings on the issue and met with the Secretary of Transportation to ensure Buy America rules are being followed. When Congressman Baird learned that some states and the Federal Highway Administration were attempting to evade Buy America requirements and use foreign steel, he introduced legislation to strengthen enforcement of the Buy America law by closing loopholes in the existing law.

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